

# Site Review Team Procedures Manual

(August 2014)

## I. Site Review Team Composition and Role

Once every four years, a site review team (SRT) visits each Sea Grant program. The SRT assesses, discusses, and reports on broad issues related to: 1) Program Management and Organization; 2) Stakeholder Engagement; and 3) Collaborative Network/NOAA Activities. According to the Federal Regulations *15 CFR 918.3: Eligibility, qualifications and responsibility of the Sea Grant College Program (Section b, 2 - 7, and 9)*, a Sea Grant program must rate highly in the criteria that are encompassed by these three categories. A program that rates highly in all areas meets the *Sea Grant Standards of Excellence*.

The Program's Federal Program Officer (FPO) chairs the SRT and produces a site visit report (Appendix A), which does not include ratings, but instead describes findings and makes suggestions and recommendations to improve the Sea Grant program's operations. Although not responsible for rating the program on any of these three areas, the Federal Program Officer (FPO) should report a finding addressing whether the program meets the *Standards of Excellence* (see Appendix B) in the site visit report. The site visit report is transmitted to the National Sea Grant College Program (NSGCP) Director and to the Sea Grant program.

Based on the site visit report and the Sea Grant program's response, the NSGCP Director makes a determination whether the program meets the *Sea Grant Standards of Excellence*. All Sea Grant programs are expected to meet this standard.

### SRT Composition

Each SRT is chaired by the Federal Program Officer (FPO), co-chaired by a member of the National Sea Grant Advisory Board (Advisory Board), and includes a Sea Grant Director as a review team member. The SRT co-chair is selected by the NSGCP Director in consultation with the Chair of the Advisory Board. Working with the co-chair, the FPO will select one or two external members, ideally from the program's region (as long as there are no conflicts of interest), who may include:

- Representatives of appropriate commercial and industrial entities;
- Directors of institutes, centers, and laboratories;
- Leaders of city/county, state and federal resource agencies, and programs (including NOAA);
- Senior officials of other academic institutions;
- Directors of cooperative extension programs or experiment stations;
- Other National Sea Grant Advisory Board members; and
- Recognized practitioners in appropriate fields (research, extension, education, communications, etc.).

Prior to their final appointment, the list of potential non-Sea Grant SRT members is reviewed by the Sea Grant program to assure there are no conflicts-of-interest. SRTs may also include non-participating observers (such as other FPOs).

## **Role of the SRT Chair**

The duties and responsibilities of the SRT Chair (FPO) are as follows:

- A. Work with the co-chair, to select and recruit other SRT members.
- B. Serve as primary spokesman for the SRT, communicating on the team's behalf to the Sea Grant program, NSGO, university officials of Sea Grant institutions, constituent organizations, and the general public.
- C. Plan the site visit. In consultation with the co-chair and the Director of the Sea Grant program being reviewed:
  1. Assist the Sea Grant Program in formulating an agenda appropriate for the visit; and
  2. Approve the public notice of the site visit, drafted and issued by the program Director.
- D. Brief the SRT concerning the conduct of the visit, and supervise the conduct of the SRT during the review. **Ensure that the review process conforms to the Federal Advisory Committee Act.**
- E. Draft findings, suggestions, and recommendations during the site visit.
- F. Together with the co-chair, conduct the exit interview with the program Director and appropriate university officials.
- G. Issue the final site visit report within 60 days of the review.

## **II. Public Notice of the Site Visit**

A minimum of thirty days prior to the site visit, the Director of the Sea Grant program under review shall issue a public notice that the program will be visited by a Site Review Team convened by the Director of the NSGCP on [X dates]. The notice invites any person to email comments on the program at least one week before the site visit date to [oar.sg.feedback@noaa.gov](mailto:oar.sg.feedback@noaa.gov). The notice will be sent to relevant partners and stakeholders, placed on the home page of the program's website, and included in relevant newsletters or announcements.

## **III. The Site Visit Structure**

Sea Grant's regulations describe the characteristics and responsibilities of Sea Grant Institutional and College programs. The SRT will focus on those aspects that fit within three broad categories:

- Program Management and Organization (organization, program team approach, and support),
- Stakeholder Engagement (relevance, advisory services, and education and training), and
- Collaborative Network Activities (relationships and coordination).

Ample time should be dedicated to all three of these areas to ensure the SRT receives enough information. The SRT will meet with the Sea Grant program's management team, advisory committees, university administration, stakeholders and others as determined by the Sea Grant program Director being reviewed.

Programs are encouraged to provide the SRT with an overview of the state Sea Grant program at the start of the site visit. Following this introduction, the SRT should receive information largely from presentations and structured or unstructured discussions in a relatively informal setting.

### **The Site Visit Schedule**

The site visit is designed to be completed over a two-day period (e.g., Tuesday/Wednesday or Wednesday/Thursday), with the first day and a half dedicated to assessing the program. The last half day is devoted to drafting the site visit report and briefing the program management team and appropriate university officials. A site visit will only span two full days and cannot begin the afternoon of one day and end the afternoon of the third day.

### **The Exit Interview**

Prior to leaving, the SRT conducts an exit interview with the program Director and appropriate university officials to summarize the findings, recommendations, and suggestions. If there is enough time, the SRT may choose to first brief the program Director and other staff members, and then brief the university officials.

### **The Site Visit Report**

The final site visit report (Appendix A) has a section highlighting findings, recommendations, and suggestions as well as any “best management practices” identified.

- A *finding* is a conclusion based on the site visit review.
- A *recommendation* is a formally prescribed course of action for which the Sea Grant program is accountable.
- A *suggestion* is an idea that is presented for consideration.
- A *best management practice* is a method or technique that has shown results superior to those achieved with other means. The best management practices identified are shared with other Sea Grant programs.

The site visit report does not include a rating for the program, but the report should state whether the Sea Grant program meets the Sea Grant *Standards of Excellence* (based on the Sea Grant Federal Regulations, see Appendix A). The draft report, written on-site and before the end of the visit, will form the basis for the site visit report. The report will be finalized by the SRT Chair (FPO) and sent to the NSGCP Director and to the state program Director within 60 days of the review.

### **The Program Response**

Once the program receives its site visit report, it has the option to implement any recommended changes. A written response to the NSGCP Director should be submitted to address all recommendations up to three weeks prior to the expanded NSGO Annual Review. The response should explain how the program has already implemented, intends to implement, or why it declines to implement each recommended course of action. The Sea Grant program is not accountable for responding to suggestions, but program leadership is encouraged to consider implementing those deemed useful and appropriate.

### **Subsequent Rating by NSGO**

The NSGCP Director reviews the findings, recommendations, and suggestions included in the site visit report, and the subsequent program’s response to the recommendations, if any. The NSGCP Director, in consultation with the NSGO, makes a final determination of whether the program meets the Sea Grant *Standards of Excellence*.

Any program that fails to meet the *Standards of Excellence* will be given a clear explanation for the rating and will be required to work with their FPO to develop a corrective action plan. That program will be placed on probationary status and will not be eligible for merit funding. Once the problems have been addressed, programs may submit an appeal to change their status to “meets the Sea Grant *Standards of Excellence*” during the next NSGO Annual Review. Programs then will become eligible for merit funding.

#### IV. Site Visit Review Criteria

This section lists the Site Visit Review criteria, which are the same as those found in Sea Grant’s regulations (15 CFR 918.3, Sections b.2-7 and b.9). To facilitate discussion in each of the three areas (Program Management and Organization, Stakeholder Engagement, and Collaborative Network Activities), potential guiding questions are provided below each section.

##### Program Management and Organization

- **Organization.** The Sea Grant College under review must have created the management organization to carry on a viable and productive Sea Grant program and must have the backing of its administration at a sufficiently high level to fulfill its multidisciplinary and multifaceted mandate.
- **Programmed team approach.** The Sea Grant program under review must have a programmed team approach to the solution of ocean/coast/watershed/Great Lakes problems which includes relevant, high quality, multidisciplinary research with associated educational and advisory services capable of producing identifiable results.
- **Support.** The Sea Grant program under review must have the ability to obtain matching funds from non-Federal sources, such as state legislatures, university management, state agencies, business, and industry. A diversity of matching fund sources is encouraged as a sign of program vitality and the ability to meet the Sea Grant requirement that funds for the general programs be matched with at least one non-Federal dollar for every two Federal dollars.

##### Potential Guiding Questions

- Is the program an intellectual and practical leader in ocean/coast/watershed/Great Lakes science, engineering, education, and advisory service in its state and region?
- Has the program created the necessary management organization to carry on a viable and productive Sea Grant program, and does the program have backing of its administration at a sufficiently high level to fulfill its multidisciplinary and multifaceted mandate?
- Does the program have a programmed team approach to solving ocean/coast/watershed/Great Lakes problems, which includes relevant, high quality, multidisciplinary research with associated educational and advisory services capable of producing identifiable results?
- Does the program have the ability to obtain matching funds from non-Federal sources, such as state legislatures, university management, state agencies, business, and industry?
- Does the program demonstrate the ability to continue the pursuit of excellence and sustain the following:
  - (i) leadership in ocean/coast/watershed/Great Lakes activities including coordinated planning and cooperative work with local, state, regional, and Federal agencies, other Sea Grant programs, and non-Sea Grant universities;
  - (ii) effective management framework and application of institutional resources to the achievement of Sea Grant objectives;
  - (iii) long-term plans for research, education, training, and advisory services consistent with Sea Grant goals and objectives;

- (iv) furtherance of the Sea Grant concept and the full development of its potential within the institution and the state;
  - (v) adequate and stable matching financial support for the program from non-Federal sources; and
  - (vi) effective system to control the quality of its Sea Grant programs
- Did the program implement or consider the recommendations from the previous SRT?
  - Does the program input usable information into the Planning, Implementation and Evaluation Resource System (PIER) in a timely manner?
  - Are publications sent to the library on a regular basis?
  - Is the Director sufficiently engaged with the program?
  - Is the host university sufficiently engaged with the program?
  - Is there an active advisory board?
  - Does the advisory board contribute to the strategic plan?
  - How much contact do advisory board members have with constituents of the program?
  - How often does the advisory board meet?
  - How much opportunity exists for new membership (turnover)?
  - Does the program use its 4-year plan to guide management and decision-making?
  - Do RFPs reflect the objectives in the 4-year plan?
  - Are RFPs effectively circulated to units of other institutions with relevant expertise?
  - Is there ongoing interaction between the Sea Grant program and representatives of other relevant research and education institutions within the state?
  - Is there an appropriate balance of research, extension, and education within the program and are the program's functional areas integrated?
  - Is the program transparent (as to what gets funded)?
  - Are peer reviews adequate and well designed with clearly identified criteria?
  - Are results of funded projects appropriately measured and assessed?
  - Are the program's practices or projects promising and worth sharing?

### Stakeholder Engagement

- **Relevance.** The Sea Grant program under review must be relevant to local, state, regional, or national opportunities and problems in the ocean/coast/watershed/Great Lakes environment. Important factors in evaluating relevance are the need for ocean/coast/watershed/Great Lakes resource emphasis and the extent to which capabilities have been developed to be responsive to that need.
- **Extension/Advisory services.** The Sea Grant program under review must have a strong program through which information, techniques, and research results from any reliable source, domestic or international, may be communicated to and utilized by user communities. In addition to the educational and information dissemination role, the advisory service program must aid in the identification and communication of user communities' research and educational needs.
- **Education and training.** Education and training must be clearly relevant to national, regional, state and local needs in fields related to ocean, Great Lakes, and coastal resources. As appropriate, education may include pre-college, college, post-graduate, public and adult levels.

### Potential Guiding Questions

- Does the program have a system by which information, techniques and research results from any reliable source, domestic or international, are communicated to, and utilized by, user communities?
- In addition to the educational and information dissemination role, does extension help in the identification and communication of user communities' research and educational needs?

- Is the program relevant to local, state, regional, or national opportunities and problems in the ocean/coast/watershed/Great Lakes environment?
- Are appropriate stakeholders informed of program results?
- Do stakeholders support the program?
- Is the program a trusted and immediate point of contact for information on ocean/coast/watershed/Great Lakes issues?
- Does the program support/dedicate resources towards education? Are those resources relevant to national, regional, state, and local needs in fields related to ocean, Great Lakes, and coastal resources?
- Does the program support students and/or informal learning opportunities?

### **Collaborative Network Activities**

- **Relationships.** The Sea Grant program under review must have close ties with Federal agencies, state agencies and administrations, local authorities, business and industry, and other educational institutions. These ties are: (i) To ensure the relevance of its programs, (ii) to give assistance to the broadest possible audience, (iii) to involve a broad pool of talent in providing this assistance (including universities and other administrative entities outside the Sea Grant College), and (iv) to assist others in developing research and management competence. The extent and quality of an institution's relationships are critical factors in evaluating the institutional program.
- **Collaboration.** The Sea Grant program under review must provide leadership in ocean/coast/watershed/Great Lakes activities including coordinated planning and cooperative work with local, state, regional, and Federal agencies, other Sea Grant programs, and non-Sea Grant universities.

### **Potential Guiding Questions**

- Does the program have close ties with Federal agencies, State agencies and administrations, local authorities, business and industry, and other educational institutions? Do these ties:
  - (i) ensure the relevance of its programmed activities,
  - (ii) give assistance to the broadest possible audience,
  - (iii) involve a broad pool of talent in providing assistance, and
  - (iv) assist others in developing research and management competence?
- Is there coordination/cooperation with other Federal, State, and local agencies in the state/region/nation?
- How has the program chosen and developed partnerships?
  - How many and what quality of partnerships exist (including those with other NOAA programs)?
  - How many, if any, new partnerships have been formed?
- Does the program contribute to the cohesiveness of the Sea Grant network?
- Is there effective communication and collaboration between the program and other Sea Grant programs and with the National Sea Grant Office?
- Does the program participate or lead activities that support the overall network?
- Does the program lead or participate in regional activities? National? Does this participation make effective use of Sea Grant network capabilities?

## **V. Site Visit Materials**

At least four weeks prior to the site visit, the SRT Chair (FPO) will distribute all information listed below to the rest of the SRT.

### **Background Materials (Provided by the NSGO)**

The NSGO provides the following background materials:

1. Last site review report
2. Sea Grant program's response to the last site review report (if applicable)
3. Information submitted to PIER by Sea Grant program for the last four annual reports (See Appendix C)
4. Sea Grant program's strategic plan.
5. Sea Grant program's briefing book.
6. Other material deemed to be relevant by the NSGO

### **Program Briefing Materials (Provided by the Sea Grant Program)**

The Sea Grant program provides the SRT with a limited and focused set of briefing materials and an agenda at least four weeks prior to the site visit. The briefing materials include the program's 2014-2017 Strategic Plan and a program site visit briefing book, no longer than 20 pages. These materials should be sent to the SRT chair (FPO). The briefing book should include a description of the Program Management and Organization (including organization, programmed team approach, and support), Stakeholder Engagement (including relevance, extension/advisory services, and education and training) and a description of the Program's Collaborative Activities (including relationships and collaboration). The data shared with the site review team should cover the last four years. The following list of items must be included for each broad category in the briefing book:

#### **A. Program Management and Organization**

##### **Leadership**

- Management Team composition and brief description of their responsibilities
- Advisory Board membership and function (expertise, meeting schedule, recommendations)
- Program setting within the university or consortium organization and reporting structure (organizational chart)

##### **Recruiting Talent**

- Brief description of the process used to develop RFP priorities
- Brief description of the review process including composition of review panels
- Number of institutions represented throughout RFP process (number of institutions in pre-proposal, full proposal and funded)
- New vs. continuing projects and Principle Investigators

#### **B. Stakeholder Engagement**

- Leadership by staff on boards and committees
- List of key partnerships and how the program involves its partners (show examples)
- List of important stakeholders and how the Program involves its stakeholders (show examples)

#### **C. Collaborative Network/NOAA Activities**

- Short description of the activities/projects the Program is collaborating on with other Sea Grant, NOAA, and additional agency partners
- Number of and types of regional/multi-program projects
- Success in Sea Grant National Competitions

**D. Program changes resulting from the previous site review**



# Appendix A

## Site Visit Report of the XXXXXX Sea Grant College Program Dates of Review



## INTRODUCTION

The Site Review Team's (SRT) visit to the xxxx Sea Grant (XSG) Program took place from enter SRT visit dates.

The SRT members included:

Name (Chair, Federal Program Officer) Affiliation City, State	Name (Co-Chair, Advisory Board Member) Affiliation City, State
Name Affiliation City, State	Name Affiliation City, State

Prior to the beginning of the SRT visit, and in conformance with National Sea Grant College Program guidelines, the xxxx Sea Grant issued a public notice of the upcoming SRT visit by inviting interested parties to send written comments to the Federal Program Officer (FPO). The public notice was distributed by means of xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx. The FPO received xxx letters in response to the public notice. *(Characterize the letters e.g., "Most of the letters were highly supportive of the xxxx Program. A few letters raised issues, which were either covered in the course of the review or were deemed to be minor in consequence.")*

The SRT visit took place *(describe the SRT location venues: campuses, site visit locations, etc.)*

During the review, the SRT met with *(brief description, e.g., identify stakeholders, university administrators, researchers, management staff, etc.)*. The SRT also benefited from poster sessions *(e.g., name specific topics, or with researchers, extension staff, and graduate students)*.

This report of the SRT visit follows the guidelines of the Site Review Team Procedures Manual. The SRT discussed broad issues related to the xxxx Sea Grant program's: 1) Organization and Management of the Program; 2) Stakeholder Engagement; and 3) Collaborative Network Activities with the Program and the FPO. Within each of these areas, each member of the SRT provided expert insights and opinions to the FPO.

This report presents the findings of the site visit and presents suggestions and recommendations to the Program to facilitate program improvement. The Chair has ensured that the review process conformed to the Federal Advisory Committee Act by reflecting the individual perspectives and opinions of the participants in the report. The report is not intended to represent the consensus viewpoint of the SRT.

## I. ORGANIZING AND MANAGING THE PROGRAM

Based on the criteria descriptions and considered questions, in this section, please explain how the program addresses each of the following:

- Organization
- Programmed team approach

- Support
- NOTE: Please include any finding, recommendation, and suggestion that addresses this section here as well.

## II. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

**Based on the criteria descriptions and the considered questions, in this section, please explain how the Program addresses each of the following:**

- Relevance
- Extension/Advisory Service
- Education/Training

NOTE: Please include any finding, recommendation, and suggestion that addresses this section here as well

## III. COLLABORATIVE NETWORK/NOAA ACTIVITIES

- Collaboration
- Relationships

NOTE: Please include any finding, recommendation, and suggestion that addresses this section here as well

## IV. FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS and SUGGESTIONS

NOTE Findings, recommendations, suggestions below should be the same as those found in section I-III. The FPO may not have any recommendations or suggestions.

Findings

- 
- 
- The FPO finds that the Program meets the *Standards of Excellence* expected of all Sea Grant programs.

**OR**

- The FPO finds that the Program could meet the *Standards of Excellence* expected of all Sea Grant programs if they address the following recommendations.

**OR**

- The FPO finds that the Program does not meet the *Standards of Excellence* expected of all Sea Grant programs for the following reasons.

Recommendations (items the Program must consider)

- 
- 
- 

Suggestions (ideas the Program may want to consider)

- 
- 
-

## **V. BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

- 
- 
- 

---

## **SRT AGENDA**

# Appendix B

## Sea Grant Program

### *Standards of Excellence for Management, Engagement and Collaboration*

This section lists the *Standards of Excellence* that are expected of every Sea Grant Program and serve as the Site Visit Review criteria. This information can also be found in Sea Grant's Federal Regulations (*15 CFR 918.3, Sections b.2-7 and b.9*), with the exception of "Collaboration" (Collaboration was added based on the 2006 National Research Council Report, *Evaluation of the Sea Grant Review Process*). The Federal Regulations state that Sea Grant programs "must rate highly in all of the following qualifying areas". Two qualifying areas, (1) Leadership and (8) Productivity, are evaluated through Sea Grant's PRP process.

#### **Program Management and Organization**

- **Organization.** The Sea Grant College under review must have created the management organization to carry on a viable and productive Sea Grant program and must have the backing of its administration at a sufficiently high level to fulfill its multidisciplinary and multifaceted mandate.
- **Programmed team approach.** The Sea Grant program under review must have a programmed team approach to the solution of ocean/coast/watershed/Great Lakes problems which includes relevant, high quality, multidisciplinary research with associated educational and advisory services capable of producing identifiable results.
- **Support.** The Sea Grant program under review must have the ability to obtain matching funds from non-Federal sources, such as state legislatures, university management, state agencies, business, and industry. A diversity of matching fund sources is encouraged as a sign of program vitality and the ability to meet the Sea Grant requirement that funds for the general programs be matched with at least one non-Federal dollar for every two Federal dollars.

#### **Stakeholder Engagement**

- **Relevance.** The Sea Grant program under review must be relevant to local, state, regional, or national opportunities and problems in the ocean/coast/watershed/Great Lakes environment. Important factors in evaluating relevance are the need for ocean/coast/watershed/Great Lakes resource emphasis and the extent to which capabilities have been developed to be responsive to that need.
- **Extension/Advisory services.** The Sea Grant program under review must have a strong program through which information, techniques, and research results from any reliable source, domestic or international, may be communicated to and utilized by user communities. In addition to the educational and information dissemination role, the advisory service program must aid in the identification and communication of user communities' research and educational needs.
- **Education and training.** Education and training must be clearly relevant to national, regional, state and local needs in fields related to ocean, Great Lakes, and coastal resources.

As appropriate, education may include pre-college, college, post-graduate, public and adult levels.

### **Collaborative Network Activities**

- **Relationships.** The Sea Grant program under review must have close ties with Federal agencies, state agencies and administrations, local authorities, business and industry, and other educational institutions. These ties are: (i) To ensure the relevance of its programs, (ii) to give assistance to the broadest possible audience, (iii) to involve a broad pool of talent in providing this assistance (including universities and other administrative entities outside the Sea Grant College), and (iv) to assist others in developing research and management competence. The extent and quality of an institution's relationships are critical factors in evaluating the institutional program.
- **Collaboration.** The Sea Grant program under review must provide leadership in ocean/coast/watershed/Great Lakes activities including coordinated planning and cooperative work with local, state, regional, and Federal agencies, other Sea Grant programs, and non-Sea Grant universities.

## **Appendix C**

### **Site Review PIER Information**

(Information gathered from the program's last four Program Annual Report Submissions in PIER; will be provided to the Sea Grant Program prior to distribution)

- A. Program Management and Organization** (organization, program team approach, and support)
  - a. Sea Grant Staffing (Individuals and FTEs; SG Funded and non-SG Funded)
  - b. Total Number of Proposals (Pre-, Full, and Funded) from Home Institution
  - c. Research Projects (Titles and PIs)
  - d. Total funding (SG + Match + Pass Through)
  - e. Distribution of Funds (SG + Match + Pass Through) by Functional Area
  
- B. Stakeholder Engagement** (relevance, advisory services, and education and training)
  - a. Number of SG-Sponsored/Organized Meetings, Workshops and Conferences and Attendees
  - b. Volunteer Hours
  - c. Students Supported
  - d. K-12 Students Reached
  
- C. Collaborative Network Activities** (relationships and coordination)
  - a. List of Program Partners (identified in projects, accomplishments, and impacts)
  - b. Sources and Amounts of Leveraged Funds (Managed and Influenced)